

CHAPTER 181
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR OPTOMETRISTS

645—181.1(154) Definitions. For the purpose of these rules, the following definitions shall apply:

“*Active license*” means a license that is current and has not expired.

“*Approved program/activity*” means a continuing education program/activity meeting the standards set forth in these rules.

“*Audit*” means the selection of licensees for verification of satisfactory completion of continuing education requirements during a specified time period.

“*Board*” means the board of optometry examiners.

“*CELMO*” means the Council on Endorsed Licensure Mobility for Optometrists.

“*Continuing education*” means planned, organized learning acts designed to maintain, improve, or expand a licensee’s knowledge and skills in order for the licensee to develop new knowledge and skills relevant to the enhancement of practice, education, or theory development to improve the safety and welfare of the public.

“*Hour of continuing education*” means at least 50 minutes spent by a licensee in actual attendance at and completion of an approved continuing education activity.

“*Inactive license*” means a license that has expired because it was not renewed by the end of the grace period. The category of “inactive license” may include licenses formerly known as lapsed, inactive, delinquent, closed, or retired.

“*Independent study*” means a subject/program/activity that a person pursues autonomously that meets standards for approval criteria in the rules and includes a posttest.

“*License*” means license to practice.

“*Licensee*” means any person licensed to practice as an optometrist in the state of Iowa.

645—181.2(154) Continuing education requirements.

181.2(1) The biennial continuing education compliance period shall extend for a two-year period beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30 of each even-numbered year.

a. Requirements for nontherapeutic licensees. Each biennium, each person who is licensed to practice as an optometrist in this state and who is not therapeutically certified shall be required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education approved by the board. Nontherapeutic licensees must comply with Iowa continuing education rules for license renewal and reinstatement by meeting the continuing education requirements in the state of practice.

b. Requirements for therapeutic licensees. Each biennium, each person who is licensed to practice as a therapeutic licensee in this state shall be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuing education approved by the board. Therapeutic licensees must comply with Iowa continuing education rules for license renewal and reinstatement regardless of the licensee’s place of residence or place of practice.

181.2(2) Requirements of new licensees. Those persons licensed for the first time shall not be required to complete continuing education as a prerequisite for the first renewal of their licenses. Continuing education hours acquired anytime from the initial licensing until the second license renewal may be used. The new licensee will be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuing education per biennium for each subsequent license renewal.

181.2(3) Hours of continuing education credit may be obtained by attending and participating in a continuing education activity. These hours must be in accordance with these rules.

181.2(4) No hours of continuing education shall be carried over into the next biennium except as stated for second renewal. A licensee whose license was reactivated during the current renewal compliance period may use continuing education earned during the compliance period for the first renewal following reactivation.

181.2(5) It is the responsibility of each licensee to finance the cost of continuing education.

645—181.3(154,272C) Standards.

181.3(1) General criteria. A continuing education activity which meets all of the following criteria is appropriate for continuing education credit if the continuing education activity:

- a. Constitutes an organized program of learning which contributes directly to the professional competency of the licensee;
- b. Pertains to common subject matters which integrally relate to the practice of the profession;
- c. Is conducted by individuals who have specialized education, training and experience by reason of which said individuals should be considered qualified concerning the subject matter of the program. At the time of audit, the board may request the qualifications of presenters;
- d. Fulfills stated program goals, objectives, or both; and
- e. Provides proof of attendance to licensees in attendance including:
 - (1) Date, location, course title, presenter(s);
 - (2) Numbers of program contact hours; and
 - (3) Certificate of completion or evidence of successful completion of the course provided by the course sponsor.

181.3(2) Specific criteria.

- a. Continuing education hours of credit may be obtained by attending:
 - (1) The continuing education programs of the Iowa Optometric Association, the American Optometric Association, the American Academy of Optometry, and national regional optometric congresses, schools of optometry, all state optometric associations, and the department of ophthalmology of the school of medicine of the University of Iowa;
 - (2) Postgraduate study through an accredited school or college of optometry;
 - (3) Meetings or seminars that are approved and certified for optometric continuing education by the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry's Council on Optometric Practitioner Education Committee (COPE); or
 - (4) Therapeutic licensees who provide proof of current CELMO certification meet continuing education requirements for that biennium.
- b. The maximum number of hours in each category in each biennium is as follows:
 - (1) Twelve hours of credit for local study group programs that meet the criteria.
 - (2) Ten hours of credit for correspondence courses, which include written and electronically transmitted material and have a postcourse test. Certification of the continuing education requirements and of passing the test must be given by the institution providing the continuing education, and that institution must be accredited by a regional or professional accreditation organization which is recognized or approved by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation of the United States Department of Education.
 - (3) Six hours of credit for practice management courses.
 - (4) Two hours of credit for dependent adult abuse and child abuse identification.
 - (5) Four hours of credit for current certification in CPR, by the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross or an equivalent organization.
 - (6) Twenty hours of credit for postgraduate study courses.
 - (7) Twenty hours of credit in the treatment and management of ocular disease from an accredited school of optometry.

c. Required continuing education hours. Therapeutic licensees who provide proof of current CELMO certification meet continuing education requirements for that biennium. If the licensee does not have current proof of CELMO certification, then the following are required to meet the continuing education requirement in paragraph 181.2(1)“b”:

(1) Twenty hours required from COPE Category B (Ocular Disease and Management) with 4 of the 20 hours as continuing education with examination (CEE); and

(2) Twenty hours required from COPE Category C (Related Systemic Disease) with 4 of the 20 hours as continuing education with examination (CEE); and

(3) Ten additional hours required from any of the COPE Categories of A, B, C (Clinical Optometry) or D (Optometric Business Management). Hours obtained in Category D may not exceed 6 hours of the total continuing education hours requirement.

645—181.4(154,272C) Audit of continuing education report. After each educational biennium, the board may audit licensees to review compliance with continuing education requirements.

181.4(1) The board may audit a percentage of its licensees and may, at its discretion, determine to audit a licensee. A licensee whose license renewal application is submitted during the grace period may be subject to a continuing education audit.

181.4(2) The licensee shall provide the following information to the board for auditing purposes or in lieu thereof provide proof of current CELMO certification:

a. Date and location of course, course title, course description, course schedule, names and qualifications of instructors/speakers and method of presentation; or a program brochure which includes all the information required in this paragraph;

b. Number of contact hours for program attended; and

c. Individual certificate of completion issued to the licensee or evidence of successful completion of the course from the course sponsor.

181.4(3) For auditing purposes, all licensees must retain the information identified in subrule 181.4(2) for two years after the biennium has ended.

181.4(4) Information identified in subrule 181.4(2) must be submitted within one month after the date of notification of the audit. Extension of time may be granted on an individual basis.

181.4(5) If the submitted materials are incomplete or unsatisfactory, the licensee may be given the opportunity to submit make-up credit to cover the deficit found through the audit if the board determines that the deficiency was the result of good-faith conduct on the part of the licensee. The deadline for receipt of the documentation for this make-up credit is 120 days from the date of mailing to the address of record at the board office.

181.4(6) Failure to notify the board of a current mailing address will not absolve the licensee from the audit requirement, and an audit must be completed before license renewal.

645—181.5(154,272C) Automatic exemption. A licensee shall be exempt from the continuing education requirement during the license biennium when that person:

1. Served honorably on active duty in the military service; or

2. Resided in another state or district having continuing education requirements for the profession and met all requirements of that state or district for practice therein; or

3. Was a government employee working in the licensee's specialty and assigned to duty outside the United States; or

4. Was absent from the state but engaged in active practice under circumstances which are approved by the board.

645—181.6(154,272C) Continuing education exemption for disability or illness. A licensee who has had a physical or mental disability or illness during the license period may apply for an exemption. An exemption provides for an extension of time or exemption from some or all of the continuing education requirements. An applicant shall submit a completed application form approved by the board for an exemption. The application form is available upon request from the board office. The application requires the signature of a licensed health care professional who can attest to the existence of a disability or illness during the license period. If the application is from a licensee who is the primary caregiver for a relative who is ill or disabled and needs care from that primary caregiver, the physician shall verify the licensee's status as the primary caregiver. A licensee who applies for an exemption shall be notified of the decision regarding the application. A licensee who obtains approval shall retain a copy of the exemption to be presented to the board upon request.

181.6(1) The board may grant an extension of time to fulfill the continuing education requirement.

181.6(2) The board may grant an exemption from the continuing education requirement for any period of time not to exceed two calendar years. If the physical or mental disability or illness for which an extension or exemption was granted continues beyond the period initially approved by the board, the licensee must reapply for a continuance of the extension or exemption.

181.6(3) The board may, as a condition of any extension or exemption granted, require the licensee to make up a portion of the continuing education requirement in the manner determined by the board.

645—181.7(154,272C) Grounds for disciplinary action. The board may take formal disciplinary action on the following grounds:

181.7(1) Failure to cooperate with a board audit.

181.7(2) Failure to meet the continuing education requirement for licensure.

181.7(3) Falsification of information on the license renewal form.

181.7(4) Falsification of continuing education information.

645—181.8(154,272C) Continuing education exemption for inactive practitioners. Rescinded IAB 8/3/05, effective 9/7/05.

645—181.9(154,272C) Continuing education exemption for disability or illness. Rescinded IAB 8/3/05, effective 9/7/05.

645—181.10(154,272C) Reinstatement of inactive practitioners. Rescinded IAB 8/3/05, effective 9/7/05.

645—181.11(272C) Hearings. Rescinded IAB 8/3/05, effective 9/7/05.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 272C.2 and chapter 154.

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